

I would therefore respectfully suggest to your Excellency that the Act No. 1, of 1895—"to guard against secret dealings in the land"—might, without public injury, be amended by extending the time for the registration of deeds executed before the passing of the Act.

I have, &c.,
JOHN B. THURSTON.

His Excellency the Right Hon. the Earl of Glasgow, &c.,
Governor of New Zealand.

Sub-enclosures.

DEAR SIR,—

London Mission, Mangaia, Cook Islands, 13th June, 1896.

In the month of April, 1895, soon after my arrival in Mangaia as agent of the London Missionary Society, I collected all the Native deeds relating to the property of my society in Mangaia, and forwarded them to our business agent in Sydney, requesting him to have the deeds translated by Dr. Wyatt Gill (who is the best living scholar of the Mangaia language), and then, having had the translations sworn to as correct, to forward them with the original deeds to your office in Fiji for the purpose of registration. I took this action simply with the desire to have matters placed on a proper legal footing as soon after my arrival as possible. There was no ulterior motive of any kind. The deeds are not, and as far as I know never have been, disputed by any one, white or Native. Any one of the chiefs or leading men of the island would, if asked, point out the boundaries of my society's property precisely as laid down in the deeds, and would readily acknowledge that it was the property of the London Missionary Society.

I am, however, informed from Sydney that there is a difficulty in effecting the registration of these deeds, though in what that difficulty consists I am in ignorance. At the time I sent up the titles there was no possibility of having them registered in Rarotonga; but in the month of August of last year an Act was proposed to the Native Parliament by Mr. Moss, and passed in a fortnight, compelling all deeds to be registered at Rarotonga before the end of the year or else to become null and void. This Act was sprung upon us without any warning; but, supposing that the Mangaia deeds were by that time safely registered at Fiji, I did not concern myself. When I heard there was a hitch it was already too late to register at Rarotonga. I am under the impression that Mr. Moss's precipitate action is due to his having received an application from the Acting High Commissioner in Suva to obtain his consent to our registration in Fiji; but surely Fiji is before Rarotonga and I was right in going to the fountain-head!

In this dilemma, I am writing to ask your kind advice and assistance. Is it really impossible to have the deeds registered in Fiji, and, if so, will you kindly inform me of the reason? Would it be possible to lay a complaint before Lord Glasgow that the request for registration has not been complied with, and ask for an inquiry?—though that surely would be to make a great business of a very small matter. May I repeat that my only desire is to have my society's property established on a business-like footing, with no wish to claim anything that is not fully acknowledged as ours; and, requesting your kind consideration on our behalf,

I am, &c.,

JAMES H. CULLEN,

London Missionary Society's Agent in Mangaia.

His Excellency Sir J. B. Thurston, K.C.M.G.

High Commissioner's Office, Western Pacific,

Suva, Fiji, 29th July, 1896.

SIR,—

I am directed by the High Commissioner to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 13th June, with reference to the deeds relating to the property of the London Missionary Society in the Cook Group.

When application was made for the registration of these deeds in this office the matter was referred to the Governor of New Zealand, as, in the event of there being a local registry in the Cook Group, the Assistant High Commissioner did not think it advisable to register here deeds relating to land in those islands.

The Governor of New Zealand sent no reply to this communication, but apparently it was decided to establish a local registry at Rarotonga.

Her Majesty's Government recognise in the Cook Group a local Legislature whose laws, subject to approval by the Resident, are binding on all persons, and, whether the deeds of your society were registered here or not, the local law should have been complied with.

In informing Mr. Pratt that the Governor of New Zealand had been referred to as to the registration of your deeds I informed him "that registration is not accompanied by any guarantee or title; it simply provides secondary evidence of the contents of documents in the event of the originals being destroyed or lost."

Under the circumstances, the High Commissioner recommends that you petition the Governor of New Zealand, with a view to his advising the Federal Government of the Cook Group to consider the case of your society favourably, and to pass an amending Act allowing further time for the production of the deeds.

The High Commissioner will also address the Governor of New Zealand on the subject.

I have, &c.,

W. COLLET, Secretary.

The Rev. James H. Cullen, London Mission, Mangaia, Cook Islands.